3/12/72

Gododdin raid

Dec 3rd.
a week ago

The Little Company of Mary
Calvary Nursing Home
Sudbury Hill
Harrow-on-the Hill
Middlesex
England

Nov. ?th
~~Nov 29~~th 1972

Dearest René

Thanks so much for yr letter — yes,
John Montague & his wife did
come to see me yesterday afternoon
Sunday. They both were so pleased
to see you & Joan & spoke with
genuine warmth of you. I've ~~[illegible]~~ known
John M. both in correspondence for
~~of~~ some time now & he's come to see
you also, but from France, but I
gathered they were go back to
County Cork — they'd left the car
at Abertawe (Swansea) I thought they said
to day or tomorrow. I like him &
yes, isn't his wife a heavenly sort
of creature — I'd not met her before.
gentle she is & with much knowledge
of the ancient things of Ireland — I
suppose she is Irish — they were not
here long enough for us to continue
our conversation — its always like
that of course an hour or so goes
so quickly. They said they would
again & would
to ~~at~~ Shanagarry to you & Joan.
give my love
Forgive my not writing before in
answer to at least two previous letters
but I've been in an awful muddle
over one thing & another & can't keep
face with any of things I ought to do
& I start a letter to you or
some other dear friend & then a
request comes for a brief thing for
some Welsh periodical or something of that
sort & as I am incapable of
writing about anything succinctly the bloody
thing taken days & days & then has to
be cut down by nine tenths, by which
time my letter to you or whoever
has got mislaid & so on. I'm
expecting Douglas Cleverdon to arrive
just now for some pages I lent
him for the Nat. Bk League exhibition
in Feb this year & which he now wants
again for the exhibition which starts
in December at Cardiff then goes to
Mold, then Bangor yn Arfon then
Aberystwyth & I think Abertawe
& won't be over till May 1973.

N.B.
None of this appalling long & useless letter
has been read through, Must get it
posted now
David.

but I've spent all the morning looking in vain for the bits of paper he wants & cant find them. though I know they are here somewhere. Hunting for things is so appallingly exhausting that I thought I'd leave it for a bit & take the opportunity of writing to you partly because I owe you these letters & want to write & partly to have a breather from the hideous search. But it cant be a proper letter but will be only about this thing of which you speak in yr letter Y Gododdin — I could not follow ~~what you thought~~ what the discussion was with John Montague or why you felt you had given a wrong impression, touching 'Taffies' and the Brittonic-speaking 'Celts' who fell at Caltraeth. But though I may be ~~[illegible]~~ having the audacity (in the sense of audemus dicere preceding the Pater noster) to state the bare facts that you know as well as I or better. ~~The raid of the 300 horse~~. As you say the raid was intended to hold or re-take the important Roman road-junction near Cataractonium (the actual junction according to the Ordnance Survey map of Roman Britain was about six miles north east at a place on Carkin Moor. but Cataractonium had been ~~a~~ ~~important legionary fort~~ walled town on the via leading north from the 'cantonal capital'x at Isurium (Aldborough) which is about fifteen miles I suppose from ~~Ebor~~ York. It would seem that Angles had by about 600 got a fair footing in ~~what~~ is now east Yorkshire that had been before & during the Roman occupation, ~~Brigantian~~ Brigantian territory. But were in two distinct groups divided by the river x & that ~~north~~ south of that river was Deira & ~~south~~ north of it Bernecia. Catraeth was just within Deira & for once in a while & for ~~[illegible]~~ a number of reasons the 'specialists' appear to agree ~~[illegible]~~ with the traditionally accepted view that Catterick in Yorkshire. — there was a view that favoured another site, but that appears to be dismissed. There is still I believe discussion about 'Bernacia' as to whether it derives from Brigantia in any way. Anyway Bernecia became Durham & Northumberland, & Deira Yorkshire. As there were settlements of Angles in Bernicia & it was the larger of the two 'kingdoms' this would mean that the men of Gododdin had to come south for

the 'capital' of what ~~[illegible]~~ 'canton' I dont know, but here I quote from the Ordnance Survey map of Roman Britain.

Cant recall its name.

part of the march
a long, ~~long way~~ along the western flank, so-to-say, of
territory to some extent already occupied by Bernecian Angles
to strike at the juncture point (or near to it) of the 'kingdom'
Bernecia & that of Deira. Well a familiar enough
strategy in warfare to attempt to drive a wedge between
groups of allied forces where they meet – but we ~~[illegible]~~
not a great deal
know ~~[illegible]~~ of the prevailing conditions
– of how organized & what not the rival groups
of invaders were at that date. But according to
the Brittonic account a very large force of
Angles had been concentrated round & about the
region of Catterick when the crunch came.
That does not seem unreasonable, as it would
be hardly possible for the Angle leaders to be
unaware that a Brittonic war-host had
been moving south through what is now Northumberland
& ~~Durham~~ county Durham making for Yorkshire, seeing that
large parts of ~~that~~ these lands were already partly
in their hands. They would presumably know also
that the force had ~~[illegible]~~ come from the
area of the Firth of Forth, so across ~~what~~ is
now the Eastern Lowlands, the area known
to Ptolemy ~~as Votadini~~ as the territory
of the Votadini – hence Gododdin in Welsh
& used of the inhabitants & the district.
the 'capital' being Din Eidyn where a
powerful but aging King named
Mynyddog^x (with the agnomen 'Mwynfawr'
meaning something like 'Wealthy') then reigned.
or very prosperous)

It is agreed that Din Eidyn (the Fort
of Eidyn) was on the site, or virtually so,
of Edinborough. In Irish annals it is
~~[illegible]~~ called Dun Eiden – in later
Irish I'm told it is spelt Dún Éideann
but you would know about that.
Anyway the site is obviously the same
& when, later, the Northumbrians pushed
north & captured Din Eidyn they
called it Edin-burh, again meaning
exactly the same thing, Brittonic Celtic
din, Goidelic ~~[illegible]~~ Celtic dun, &
Teutonic burh – no argument
as to that equation – a fortified
place of some sort. Who or what
'Eidyn' signifies I dont know.
But I imagine that's just ignorance
on my part.*

In Modern Welsh Edinburgh
is called ~~[illegible]~~ Caeredin, then
again Caer ~~[illegible]~~ means ~~[illegible]~~ a
fort of some sort. – and the 'edin'
looks like a borrowing from English
but dont know. Anyway it is
no help as to 'Eidyn', blast
them. And Din by itself is no
longer given in Welsh dictionaries,
but only dinas – a town or
city, or just used with a
place-name attached to it. ~~e.g.~~ e.g.
Dinas Mawddwy, 'Town in Mawddwy'
~~Dinas Maw~~ ~~Din or [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]~~.

^x pronounced
Mun-úth-og
accent on middle syllable
'th' as 'th' in 'these'
at least that would be
the medieval & modern
Welsh pronunciation.
In Early Welsh
I dont know, – accent
may have been on
end syllable.

Yes of course, it was
the name of a district or
subdivision of some sort
round about Edinburgh
so Din Eidyn merely
meant the Fortress in Eidyn.
I believe that information
comes from an Irish annalist
of some sort – forgotten of what
precise date.

I imagine *Din* fort, was replaced by *Caer* in Wales in the middle ages to a large extent, rather as *cil* or *Kil* meaning a religious foundation of some sort or cell in the monastic sense, while retained in Irish Celtic seem to have given way to other terms in Welsh, many I suppose *llan* or *monachlog* or *capel* or *addoldy* — I don't know. ~~Anyway Kil~~ there are it is true a fair number of Welsh places retaining *Kil* — maybe about thirty all told Cilcain near where my father was born, Cilcennin, in Cards & Cilgerran in Pembs. & Cilmeri below Llanganten where is the monument to Llywelyn the Last, but *nothing like* the number of places with the element *Kil* as they are in Ireland. The same I think occurs with Welsh *Din*. fort, corresponding exact with Irish *Dun*, *Caer* for some reason ~~became~~ the word mostly used of a fortified place of any sort & more than that towns outside Wales, e.g Canterbury ~~was~~ is called Caer-gaint, Cambridge, Caer-grawnt, Bath, Caerfaddon.

But again I meander to no purpose, sorry. One bloody thing leads to another.

But to get back if I can to this *Gododdin* Catraeth business. For a number of reasons based on evidence of the situation in the north of England, among the Angles & the extent of their occupation & relative power it makes some date round about A.D. 600 — might be in the late five-eighties or a ~~early part of~~ few years after 600, but difficult to suppose outside that span of the ten to fifteen years. That is from evidence or presumed evidence outside Welsh tradition which seems always to have taken circa 600 as the date.

In the latter part of the 6th Cent. It had been Urien King of Rheged a district partly in the south west Lowlands but stretching down into northern England — some think centred about Carlisle, Urien and his son Owain remained figures typic of the resistance to the ~~invaders~~ invaders of Britain & names to conjure with in Welsh tradition for centuries & centuries, 'Arthur-figures' as it were so that when that *confounded* Geoffrey of Monmouth got down to his *Historia Regum Britanniae* which in turn gave rise to the Great European Romance cycles Urien of Rheged & Owain his son crop up as you will well remember as Kyng Uriens or Uryence, etc. of the land of Gorre & Uwayne or Ewayns etc son of King Uryence (I quote here from old Vinaver's index, because I have not got my Everyman Caxton with me here but only ~~[illegible]~~ that 3 vol. Malory of Vinaver which is of course a wonderful job, but I agree with you, he Vinaver, with all his French text erudition, can be a bloody ~~[illegible]~~ nuisance.)

Anyway, in actual history Urien of Rheged & his son Owain ab Urien were real enough blokes though we know little of them except what Nennius tells us in his *Historia Brittonum* of the 9th Cent & Welsh tradition of the same century & constant reference to them by the poets of the Welsh princes ~~& later as [illegible] refer [illegible] Nelson [illegible] a model of [illegible] Hector [illegible] was [illegible] name [illegible] the name Owain [illegible]~~ and later.

At all events Urien of Rheged besieged a group of Angles on the Metcaud (Lindisfarne) and was at the point of success when murdered by another Brittonic leader, called Morgant, because of the jealousy of Urien's ability & leadership. ~~[illegible]~~ ~~Nennius says that Urien [illegible] with [illegible] notables in [illegible] Metcaud.~~

Now this ~~[illegible]~~ action led by Urien was made to prevent the Angles on Insula Metcaud from getting a bridgehead on the mainland opposite where Bamburgh Castle now stands ~~&~~ ~~[illegible]~~ was obviously made with a sense of strategy and had it not been for the *invidia* of that bastard Morgant would have succeeded & so at least halted for a while the Angle occupation of that part of Bryneich (the Welsh form of Bernicia). The date of the Urien's murder is not known with precision but probably in the 580s ~~[illegible]~~ not later than 590. ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~

Bede dates the occupation of Bamburgh by Ida as early as 547, but this is considered an error or slip of some sort as it is too early. However, the point is that ~~&~~ Urien Rheged & ~~[illegible]~~ & his son Owain were both dead before the Gododdin raid. And it looks as if it was made ~~not~~ *only* to strike at the right point strategically but at a point in time that offered some

Chance of success, that is before the enemy were so strongly
consolidated — may be the Brittonic leaders at Din Eiddyn
considered ~~it~~ ~~[illegible]~~ the circumstances were such
as would not be offered again — or of course, they
had no such apprehension but, like many another
decision to launch an offensive. ~~they~~ the leaders were
completely confident of triumph. and considering the
the changing fortunes & shifts of power then in progress
they probably ~~[illegible]~~ chose right. But things did not
turn out so happily.

One thing might be said, but hardly necessary to
say to you. that the 300 or 303 the accounts vary,
horse ~~[illegible]~~ armoured & riding splendid horses
white-coloured seems the most favoured were the
leaders, unbeniaid, an unbenn* was one of
words used for lords of importance, 'high-men,'
leaders in battle. As in Irish poetry of

*pronounce in'-ben

the heroic age, it was the men of rank who
~~[illegible]~~ ~~were~~ eulogized or whose deaths were
mentioned, the spearmen who composed the
forces are not so much as referred to, so we
don't know the size of the 'war-host' that came
to grief at Catraeth. But we can dismiss
the ludicrous idea the King Mynyddog of
Din Eidyn sent a force of 300 horse
down to Catterick to deal with large
forces of Angles, yet I fancy this ~~[illegible]~~
absurd idea ~~[illegible]~~ was imagined by some
chaps.* — 300 ~~against~~ horsemen against many
thousands of large foot soldiers of the invaders!

* in fact it was a quite general idea.

I wonder why the shields ~~of~~ in the Gododdin poem
~~[illegible]~~ & sometimes in later Welsh poetry, are
said to have whitened with calch, 'lime,'
it seems to have been a common Celtic practice
for in some Irish battle I recall how it
says the powder of the limewashed shields
filled the air — a strange practice — as
inconvenient in its own way as the
semi-darkness caused in recent times — at
Waterloo for instance by the kind of gun-powder
then in use so that you couldn't see
the enemy until he was a few paces from
you, this, after a single discharge of a
'Brown Bess', apart from the smoke of artillery
batteries, is, as you know, often mentioned
in accounts of chaps involved in battles
of that period — the thick dark gloom
~~[illegible]~~ adding to the difficulties & ~~[illegible]~~
making confusion, as they say,
worse confounded. But that was
an unavoidable nuisance caused by
the kind of gun powder then in use.

Whereas this mist-white ~~[illegible]~~
~~[illegible]~~ drift rising from the shattering
or ~~c~~ompact of shields in
~~[illegible]~~ these ~~[illegible]~~ Dark-Age Celtic conflicts
seems difficult to account for.
I mean ~~[illegible]~~ it's easy to
see how they would be proud
of a finely decorated war-shield,
as of a sword-hilt & its
~~scabbard~~ equally fine sheaf.
& horse-trappings. etc. ~~&~~ we

Know from Welsh poetry how they made gleaming white with limewash the walls of forts & dwellings of all sorts, churches, etc. & I've no doubt the evidence for Ireland would be the same. but it's hard to see what purpose was served in ~~the [illegible]~~ surfacing a shield with stuff that would tend to crumble & raise whitish powder at the first stroke, but such appears to have been the practice. And in the account of that battle in Ireland×, I can't remember the date of anything at all about it, except that the ~~[illegible]~~ writer ~~[illegible]~~ ~~the~~ mentions the white mist rising from the impact of the lime-whited shields. Again I've wondered for the point.

One thing to get clear is that from the Clyde – Firth of Forth area (& may be more north still.) it would appear virtually certain that a Celtic language called 'Brittonic' (for convenience largely to distinguish it from the 'Gaelic' or 'Irish' or 'Goidelic' Celtic language) was spoken, with dialectic variants of course, down to the English Channel &, indeed until Gaul took to Latin after J. Caesar's conquest, the same 'Brittonic' Celtic was spoken as far as the Loire anyway.

This Celtic language was in various ways very like Latin, E.g. had the same system of declensional endings. our old friend 'Cymbeline' was Cunobelinos in the nominative & had accusative, genitive, dative, ablative terminations very similar to ~~say [illegible]~~ those of, say, Vergilius in Latin. During the four or more centuries between Caesar's invasion of Britain in 54 B.C. ~~and~~ followed by the Claudian invasion & occupation of when was it? 54 AD and the three hundred years that followed of Romanization & the sub-Roman period bringing us to ~~the~~ about 500 — during all that time this Brittonic language slowly lost its terminal endings so that by c. A.D. 600 Cunobelinos would already be Cynfelyn or something near that. & a loaned Latin name, e.g. Ambrosius, would have become Emrys, or something near that.*

In short proto-Welsh, followed by Early-Welsh followed by Medieval Welsh & Modern Welsh devolved out of Brittonic Celtic, just as Spanish, Italian, French devolved from 'low' or is it 'Vulgar' Latin at differing periods. Otherwise there would be no Welsh language to-day. I don't believe that chaps on the whole realize that is how it worked, nor why it is that large numbers of ordinary Welsh words still in use were loaned into the Brittonic language from Latin during the period of the Roman Occupation of Britain. e.g. pysg < piscis, saeth < sagitta, ~~[illegible]~~ cannwyll < candela etc. I merely cite these two or three words, because obvious

The other ~~[illegible]~~ Welsh form of David, that is Dafydd (pronounced dav-ith) is a much later borrowing. The first Dafydds I can recall was ~~[illegible]~~ the bard & a prince in Gwynedd in the 12th Century & then on the name Dafydd became as you know ~~[illegible]~~ one of the more popular of Welsh names, & indeed gave rise to the English term for a Welshman as a 'Taffy', itself evidence that f in Welsh = v. 'Davy' would be nearer the mark.

× mentioned above

But there is a much more interesting question about Dafydd, David. I wonder why the ~~[illegible]~~ name became first used by a prince & a court-poet in the 12th Cent. & from what source it came. I can't remember the date of David I of Scotland, but that too was an innovation & that too made the name popular throughout the subsequent centuries of Scottish history — right on until the present time. I have a bit back asked a couple of chaps whose studies were etymological & etymological about Dafydd but could get no proper answer or at least it appears to me that they were very guarded.

it is not a good example of what I'm talking about, because the forms I'm thinking of with the 'g' are I think much later, in Asser, King Alfred's mate. anyway you know how the 'intervocalic g' dropped out of use in various words. But at least it shows that the Latin V was pronounced W & certainly of the 11th Cent. the word, as I say, first borrowed from the Vulgate Dawid was fixed as Dewi in Welsh & has remained so to this day. The final d, was supposed to be due to a Southern Welsh tendency to let ~~[illegible]~~ that happen. But I don't know what 1972 experts have to say about that. The odd thing is that after Dewi Sant (5th-6th Cent.) no one in Wales was called Dewi, until it became used as a Xtian name in the romantic & religious revival of the late 18th & 19th centuries. Some Nonconformist minister, Hughes or Jones might have his son christened 'Dewi' so you get an occasional Mr. Dewi Huw Hughes, that sort of thing to-day. But nobody as far as is known, was called Dewi after Dewi Sant in the 6th Cent, all through the middle ages or in the Tudor, Stuart, & Hanoverian times.

The Dewi from Ch. Latin David is certain & easy to see and the fact that it is used only of Dewi Sant would seem to be a matter of veneration. there could be only one Dewi. After all other great Welsh founders' names, Illtud for example were never given to subsequent chaps, same with Samson of Dôl & Deiniol who founded Bangor i.e. [illegible].

* can give only the Medieval & modern form, but my intermediate forms are known to specialist scholars in many cases. for example, as you know, the Welsh for St. David is now Dewi Sant. and came of course from the period when the church had introduced the Latin form of the ~~[illegible]~~ O.T. King David pronounced, presumably, Dawid. This was spelt in earlier MS. in various ways Degui & other but I can't remember. Blast! no ref. bk here to help, & anyway

the 'natives' would have had a word for 'fish' & 'arrow' before any contact with ~~the Roman~~ romanity, possibly not for 'candle' — I mean in that specific form, but it is interesting how ~~these~~ hundreds of words loaned into Brittonic from Latin came through in Welsh — all with the loss of a final ~~[illegible]~~ syllable. ~~as Gwener~~ as the name Gwener from 'Veneris', and leaving aside the ~~[illegible]~~ words of obvious ecclesial connection, as esgob from episcopus, eglwys ~~[illegible]~~ ecclesia ~~[illegible]~~. this is of course obvious once the Impire tolerated & then officially adopted the Xtian cultus.

But what I find interesting is the way in ~~[illegible]~~ which Gaul became quickly and totally Latin in speech (I understand there are less than a dozen Gaulish Celtic (ie Brittonic) words that have survived into the French language — Well, you'd know all about that) whereas in Britain, as much part of the Western imperium as Gaul, the native tongue continued side by side the official Latin. The gradual loss of the declensional endings would have continued in Brittonic Celtic had there been ~~[illegible]~~ no contact with Latin through the legions & governmental set-up of the empire. It appears to be a thing that happens to languages, but as this Brittonic Celtic had naturally borrowed a good many words from Latin, over the centuries of occupation, by the time (circa 550 by reckoning) a very early form of 'Welsh' immerged the forms dont easily ~~[illegible]~~ show themselves to be what would be expected of ~~an [illegible] inflected language that was Brittonic Celtic~~. They used to call such languages as Latin or the ~~[illegible]~~ older Celtic 'synthetic' & languages that devolved from them 'analytic', but I'm told that is an outmoded distinction. What do you make of it? I should have thought that a language such as Latin with its fully declensional system, so that prepositions like from, with, to, were ~~[illegible]~~ indicated within one word could reasonably be called 'synthetic' in relation to ~~languages like modern~~ 'modern' languages like French or Italian, Spanish. And Middle English devolved out of Anglo-Saxon in much the same way. So Welsh did from this Old Brittonic Celtic. I dont know when this process occurred in Irish, but I suppose it must have followed a similar process.

'proto-Welsh'

a 'new' analytic speech at its stage 1 rising from ~~an~~ inflected language in the case Brittonic Celtic.

I'm putting this appallingly badly — but I mean to any but a specialist it is practically impossible to recognise anything. If only I were in my dugout at Northdene with my books available I could show you what I mean.

Anyway it seems to me essential to understand that as far as we know, some form of 'Brittonic' Celtic spoken over most of this island & like any other language was undergoing slow changes during the period of the Roman occupation, along side the official language of Empire & that in the later phases of that empire the British kingdoms of what is now southern Scotland — that is

the lands between the Antonine turf wall & the
Great Wall of Hadrian were on good terms with
the Imperial power and were regarded as numeri
or foederati or anyway 'friendlies' in the sense
the British Raj, when there was one, regarded
some African or Asian tribal states. The Votodini
of the ~~east side~~ eastern lowlands appear
to have been so regarded and Strathclyde
on the west side with its fortress on the
Rock in the tidal estuary Altclud ~~[illegible]~~ or
Petra Cloithe & other variants, called later
Dumbarton (said to mean 'the Dun of the
Britons') and that area of Kyle – where
Coil Hen – 'Old King Cole' founded a
dynasty or at all events, was regarded with
great veneration & ~~said to be of [illegible]~~ Urien
Rheged was said to be of his line & the
Kings & princes of Gwynedd claimed
descent from Coil also & the whole tradition
of the Welsh ~~dynasty~~ dynasties with the
Gwyr y Gogledd 'The Men of the North'
however embroidered in detail cannot
be ~~invented~~ fictitious as a whole

Sunday
~~Nov.~~
Dec 3rd
72.

'As f a know Cunedda Wledig in that
tradition came from Votadini round abt
400 to Gwynedd combat the settlements
of Goidelic Celts ~~[illegible]~~, called Feni I
think, from the opposite shore of Ireland
in fact it was said that Gwynedd or,
Guenedota got its name from these Feni
and it was considered that this movement
could only have been made under Roman
auspices; this is disputed by some
authorities as a bit too early, but
it would seem to me a more likely
than a later invasion, implying
a sea-passage from some point
in South-west 'Scotland' or North-west
'England' by a tribe situated in
south east Scotland. – however
the point is that the Welsh
Kings, later princes of North Wales
& the princes of Powys all in
various ways considered themselves
as ~~[illegible]~~ having definite connection
with the defenders of the ~~[illegible]~~
island in the North ~~&~~ this
is continuous in Welsh poetry
e.g. Hywel* a son of Owain Gwynedd
in the 12th Cent. speaks of the

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* or it may have
been another of
that period.

land of Rheged as though he could ride there as easily as in the confines of Wales itself. It is interesting too that in the Welsh Chronicles of the Princes Brut y Tywysogion, the word used is seldom the Cymry but the Britons – & the Normans are invariably Y Ffraine the French. that's very marked.

Forgive all this useless insufferable meandering René. I merely intended to send my love to you & Joan & now have scrawled nine sheets of illegible rubbish – & I ought to be trying to deal with oceans of neglected stuff. But now its written I haven't the heart to tear it up. & start again – & I'm not up to much & get tired so quickly. I think of you so much –

My exhibition has evidently started at Cardiff as I had a ~~[illegible]~~ Greetings telegram yesterday from Valerie Edward gone down there for the opening & it was signed also by Rollo Charles who is keeper of the Gallery in the Nat. Mus. of Wales. & one or two other people included Cecil Gill.

Must shut up now. I'm expecting Louis B. this evening, if he comes I'll give it to him to post.

Again, Not read through no time now. God bless you forgive awful mess much love to Joan

as ever dear René,
my love to you
Bendith arnoch*
Dafydd

* blessing on you.

Yet quite a bit more I wanted to say about ~~[illegible]~~ Catraeth & how its story became so much a part of ~~[illegible]~~ the deposits of Wales.